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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000249

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: THACI GOVERNMENT TAKING KEY STEPS TO
COMBAT TIP

Classified By: CDA TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Since taking office in January 2008, Prime Minister Thaci's government has taken some key steps in the fight against trafficking in persons (TIP) in Kosovo. In hopes of achieving better results in the future, the Kosovo government recently adopted a law enforcement-centered approach to combating TIP and moved the national counter-trafficking coordinator out of his Office for Good Governance (OGG) and into the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA). The government also replaced National Counter-trafficking Coordinator Habit Hajredini with Deputy Interior Minister Fatmir Xhelili in late April. Xhelili is currently studying the trafficking problem and the tools Kosovo has at its disposal to combat it in order to craft a new national counter-trafficking strategy. He recently shared his initial thoughts and rough draft with poloff and ICITAP TIP adviser, which includes creation of a steering committee and secretariat, as well as working groups on prevention, prosecution and protection. Xhelili is also considering extending the Kosovo Action Plan 2005-2007 (KAP) until he can enact a new one, and he is studying whether Kosovo needs additional anti-trafficking legislation. Post will encourage Xhelili to remain proactive and continue implementing the expired KAP even as he works to update the government's anti-TIP program. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) Since taking office in January 2008, Prime Minister Thaci's government has taken key steps to tackle trafficking in persons (TIP) in Kosovo. In hopes of achieving better results in the future, PM Thaci adopted a law enforcement-centered approach to combating TIP and moved the national counter-trafficking coordinator out of his Office for Good Governance (OGG) and into the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA). He replaced National Counter-trafficking Coordinator Habit Hajredini with Deputy Interior Minister Fatmir Xhelili in late April. Many counter-trafficking activists and officials in Kosovo welcomed this move because Hajredini's work as the national coordinator for anti-corruption, gender issues and human rights prevented him from focusing more clearly on counter-trafficking. While Hajredini was relegated to reporting on and coordinating others' activities, most expect Xhelili to be a more proactive in his role as national counter-trafficking

coordinator and to actually propose and promote counter-trafficking policies and legislation.

¶3. (C) In the few weeks Xhelili has been national counter-trafficking coordinator, he has met with many of Kosovo's counter-trafficking officials and activists and consulted the existing counter-trafficking working groups. He has also made a point of educating himself on the situation in Kosovo by studying the variety of reports on Kosovo's trafficking problem, including those of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) Trafficking in Human Beings Section (THBS), the European Commission, and our own annual TIP report. He plans to develop a new national counter-trafficking strategy in the coming months; he shared his ideas and rough draft with poloff and ICITAP TIP adviser on May 5.

Xhelili's Vision

¶4. (C) Xhelili told us he will propose a steering committee, a secretariat and working groups on prevention, protection and prosecution. According to the rough draft Xhelili shared with us, he would chair the steering committee, which would include representatives of relevant ministries, such as the Ministries of Justice (MOJ), Education (MOE), and Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW), as well as international organizations and NGOs. The steering group would work on a new Kosovo Action Plan (KAP), oversee the work of the secretariat (see paragraph 5), and hold monthly meetings to reach consensus on counter-trafficking recommendations. Ultimate decision-making authority, however, would rest with the national counter-trafficking coordinator and the MOIA.

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¶5. (C) Xhelili said he would head the secretariat, which would essentially consist of him and three assistants (language, financial and administrative). The secretariat would coordinate work between the steering committee and the working groups, draft policy proposals, propose counter-trafficking activities, arrange meetings and prepare and translate documents. Since the MOIA budget has already been determined for 2008, Xhelili plans to seek international funding for the secretariat. The Government of Finland has already expressed a willingness to fund the first 2-4 months of the secretariat, but has attached an unusual condition to the offer: it wants to name one of the three assistants in the secretariat and have that person work out of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Xhelili is considering the offer, but he confided that he is uncomfortable with this arrangement. He welcomes international community advice and assistance, but believes the secretariat should be composed of Kosovo civil servants.

¶6. (C) Xhelili told us his proposed strategy relies heavily on the three working groups. The prevention working group, which would consist of representatives from the MOIA, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), international organizations and NGOs, would introduce strategies, such as information campaigns aimed at young girls, to prevent Kosovars from becoming trafficking victims. The protection working group would recommend concrete actions to protect victims and assist them with reintegration into society, and would consist of representatives of the MOIA, KPS, MLSW, international organizations, and NGOs. (Note: Post recommended inclusion of the MOJ Victims Advocacy Unit in the protection working group. End Note.) The prosecution working group would consist of representatives of the MOIA, MOJ and KPS, and it would recommend actions against traffickers.

Kosovo Action Plan and Possible Counter-trafficking Law

¶7. (C) Xhelili said he recognizes the urgency of adopting a new Kosovo Action Plan (KAP). He realizes that it will take time to build up the working groups, secretariat and steering

committee and to focus them on drafting the KAP and gaining public support for it. Not wanting to lose momentum in the anti-TIP fight, he told us he will study what was not achieved in the KAP that expired in December 2007 and consider extending it until Kosovo enacts a new KAP. Xhelili also mentioned that the European Commission (EC) and others have recommended that Kosovo enact an anti-trafficking law. He is looking into whether this is necessary. (Note: Most counter-trafficking activists that post has engaged on the subject believe that Kosovo has adequate trafficking-related laws. Nevertheless, some cite the lack of a law which specifically punishes clients as a deficiency. End Note.)

18. (C) COMMENT: The Kosovo Government has taken an important step toward strengthening Kosovo's counter-trafficking capacity by making Deputy Minister Xhelili the national counter-trafficking coordinator and switching to a law enforcement-centered approach. We are encouraged by Xhelili's enthusiasm and will work closely with him to expand his thinking on how best to use his working groups, including broadening the scope of the prevention working group to include all elements of society and focusing the prosecution working group on interagency cooperation in bringing criminals to justice. We will also continue to highlight the importance of counter-trafficking in meetings with Kosovo Government officials and will provide advice and assistance to Xhelili as he develops and implements his new national counter-trafficking strategy. END COMMENT.
KAIDANOW